

# Spellman vetoes, signs parts of redistricting plan

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**OLYMPIA** — Gov. John Spellman today vetoed the Legislature's plan to create eight new congressional districts in Washington, but he signed into law a plan creating 49 new legislative districts.

In a rare rebuff of his fellow Republicans who run the Legislature, Spellman had harsh words for the new congressional-boundaries plan.

He said it would result in a "wholesale disenfranchisement" of Washington citizens—"temporarily—and called that "neither necessary or desirable." All the state's congressmen, plus Senators Slade Gorton and Henry M. Jackson, had asked Spellman to veto the congressional plan.

G.O.P. leaders of the House and Senate, plus Representative Bob Eberle, Vashon Island Republican and chief architect of redistricting, had urged Spellman to sign the whole package into law. Eberle called the veto unfortunate.

Spellman told legislative leaders, in a veto message, they could try again at the next session of the Legislature in January, 1982. That

could put into place the new congressional districts in time for the '82 elections.

The action came without prior announcement, as Spellman worked at his desk signing a series of minor bills with a few bill-signing ceremonies. He appeared stern as he held an impromptu news conference, announcing the veto.

Spellman said that the congressional plan "without adequate reason bifurcates important communities" in the state. Under the plan, Spokane would have been divided into both the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. And Aberdeen and Hoquiam would have been in separate congressional districts.

In all, more than 2 million Washington citizens would have been placed in new congressional districts and would not be represented by their present congressman, Spellman said. He issued a list which indicated more than 948,000 King County residents would have been placed in that situation.

Eberle said today, "I think we had a good plan, which would make

fair and competitive districts." He added he was pleased that Spellman signed the legislative-redistricting sections of the bill.

That set up legislative districts around the state, each with a population of about 84,300. Secretary of State Ralph Munro, in checking those districts before Spellman's action, discovered some errors, which would imbalance districts.

But Spellman said those "glitches" could eventually be cured by the Legislature with simple amendments to the redistricting law.

Minority Democrats have complained the legislative districts were "gerrymandered" to help Republicans. A citizens' group has filed an initiative to repeal the measure and to create a redistricting commission to redraw the lines every 10 years.

Because the bill had an "emergency clause," it became law—and the new districts became operative—when Spellman signed it shortly after 11 a.m.